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Gold River Messenger

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EDDM RETAIL

*****ECRWSS*****

Local Postal Customer

Scrambling for Shots

California Vaccine Chaos Amid Mixed Messaging



Dana Zahniser (left), Nurse Shift Manager, ED and Sherry Harris (right), Employee Health RN both administered vaccines and then at the end vaccinated each other. Photo courtesy Dignity Health

By Barbara Feder Ostrov and Ana B. Ibarra, CALMatters

The chaos and confusion many Californians experienced this week in their search for a COVID-19 vaccine only intensified as Gov. Gavin Newsom revealed that the state would not receive an additional supply of doses it was counting on to accelerate vaccination.

Newsom said he, like other governors, expected about 50 million doses to be released from storage by the feds in the next few days. "And then we read, as everybody else, that they have reneged or ... are unable to deliver on that," he said at a news conference unveiling a new mass vaccination site at Dodger Stadium.

The governor said he does expect there to be enough vaccine for Californians who already have received

their first shot and need the required second dose. But the state needs to verify the supply it will be given, he said.

Federal officials had promised states an expanded supply of vaccine and demanded they start vaccinating people 65 and older and those with documented preexisting conditions to speed the slow pace of immunizations nationwide.

But a national stockpile of vaccines held back for necessary second doses appears to have been depleted, meaning that states won't get the amount of vaccine they were counting on to dramatically ramp up mass vaccination campaigns, according to a Washington Post report Friday.

Newsom last week announced an audacious goal of immunizing 1 million people in 10 days, under mounting political pressure over the state's slow vaccine rollout. But at least 450,000

people would need to receive shots today to fulfill that goal. The state is on pace to achieve it, Newsom said, adding that there is a lag in the state's data reporting.

California has used about 30% of the doses it has been allocated from the federal government while Texas has used about 55%, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. California ranks 43rd among states in the proportion of people it has immunized.

On Wednesday, following hastily-announced federal guidance, Newsom said that anyone 65 and older could now be immunized - broadening a complicated priority system that previously reserved doses for health workers and nursing home residents.

Local public health officials and
Continued on page 9

Proposition 19 Puts Family Legacies at Risk



Senator Ted Gaines

Commentary by Ted Gaines

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - A massive change to property tax law is coming soon that could cost families thousands of dollars a year and affect how parents and grandparents pass down properties through generations.

Proposition 19, passed by California voters last November, makes major adjustments to the "parent-child" and "grandparent-grandchild" exclusions, all to the harm of taxpayers. Prior to Prop. 19, parents and grandparents could transfer their principal residence to a child or grandchild with no value limit and without adjusting the property tax base-year value, meaning that the child or grandchild would not be saddled with a huge new property tax assessment when they became owner. The person receiving the property could live there, rent it out, use it as a second home, or let it sit empty - there were no restrictions on property use to qualify for the exemption.

Prop. 19 changes all of that. Once the new law goes into effect on February 16, 2021, the unlimited value provision disappears. The new formula will be the current taxable value of the property plus one-million dollars. This change will hit many coastal property owners in the pocketbook as they inherit or receive property that appreciated wildly in California's multi-decade housing boom. Modest homes in Silicon Valley neighborhoods owned and transferred by middle-class families will face stratospheric tax bills under the new regime.

As bad as that will be, it is another provision that is more likely to cause havoc and financial loss for many Californians. Under Prop. 19, a person receiving property under one of these exclusions must now use the property as their primary residence to qualify. That means if you have moved to a different city, you would have to move back and occupy the home to receive the exemption. It means that if you are happy with your current home,
Continued on page 6

Meeting Critical Needs

Story by Shaunna Boyd

RANCHO CORDOVA, CA (MPG) - The mission of the Folsom Cordova Community Partnership (FCCP) is to enhance the education, health, and wellbeing of children, youth, and adults in the community. "Anywhere there is a need in the community, we seek to fill that gap," said FCCP Executive Director Robert Sanger.

Operating both a Family Resource Center (10665 Coloma Rd., Ste. 200) and a Job Center (10826 Gadsten Way) in Rancho Cordova allows FCCP to provide targeted resources that will have the most impact for community members in need.

The Family Resource Center offers a wide variety of community support services such as legal assistance, general counseling, domestic violence counseling, housing referrals, baby supplies, assistance with Medi-Cal and Covered California



Folsom Cordova Community Partnership distributed food to local families this past Thanksgiving, and their safety net services are available year round to those in need. Photos courtesy of FCCP.

eligibility and applications, family activities, and more. Families can also participate in Effective Parenting workshops and the Birth & Beyond Home Visitation

program through FCCP's Family Resource Center. FCCP can even help people access free cell phones and low-cost internet.

At the Job Center, customers can access job search assistance, professional skills training, assistance with resume preparation and interviewing
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Looming Tax Tsunami Requires Immediate Action to Protect Unemployed

By Jacqui Nguyen, Senate Republican Caucus

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - California Senate Republicans are concerned about the looming tax tsunami facing unsuspecting and unemployed Californians stemming from mismanagement and fraud in the state's Unemployment Insurance program. Senate Republicans delivered a letter to Governor Newsom urging him to take immediate action to help those innocent victims.

Californians will begin receiving 1099-G tax forms summarizing their taxable earnings from unemployment benefits. Not only will the tax bill come as a shock to recipients, there is a distinct possibility many victims of fraud will be left on the hook for taxes on money never received. The Employment Development Department (EDD) has struggled to do even the slightest thing right during the pandemic and to think this agency could straighten this out on its own prior to tax day is unfathomable.

By the end of 2020, EDD had paid out \$10.4 billion in benefits to claimants whose identities were unverified and that figure could climb as high as \$30 billion. This resulted in frozen bank accounts, stalled benefit payments and a variety of other problems each of our offices has been tirelessly working to help these individuals with over the last ten months.

The Auditor's report last week underscored Californians' worst nightmare by pointing out the potential problems with regard to tax liability. Without immediate action by the Governor and our federal representatives, innocent people will be left to fight the IRS over tax liabilities for benefits they never received.

Senate Republicans share the auditor's concerns, and want to ensure the Newsom Administration is taking every action possible to enact the auditor's recommendation to promptly assist victims of identity theft and help them avoid tax liabilities for unreceived benefits. April 15 is just a few months away and Republicans are rightfully concerned the agency will be unable to effectively address this new challenge.

An excerpt of the letter is below. For the full letter visit [cssrc.us/sites/default/files/210202_EDD-Fraud-Tax-Liability-Audit.pdf](https://www.cssrc.us/sites/default/files/210202_EDD-Fraud-Tax-Liability-Audit.pdf).

... As we enter the tax filing season, many Californians will be surprised to learn that they have tax liabilities for UI benefits that were fraudulently claimed in their name. This is because 1099-G forms will soon be arriving in the mailboxes of taxpayers who were victims of identity fraud. Even more concerning is that there will be victims of identity fraud who will have no idea why they even received one of these forms until after they file taxes. This is because EDD is generally going

to mail the 1099-G to the most recent addresses of record, which are the ones the bad actors used to obtain UI benefits.

The State Auditor shares our concern for the tax liabilities for victims of this identity theft and recommends that EDD should prepare to assist victims of identity theft to ensure that they receive prompt assistance and avoid tax liabilities for benefits they never received. Specifically, the auditor recommends that EDD must prepare to respond to victims of identity theft who receive incorrect tax forms, and should, by mid-February 2021, provide information on its website and set up a separate email box for such individuals to contact EDD and receive prompt resolution. We wholeheartedly agree with this recommendation, but remain skeptical about the agency's ability to do it effectively, if at all. Our offices are currently hearing from the same amount of constituents as we did last spring, who are seeking help from EDD because of problems with identity verification, frozen claims, and frozen accounts. ...

Last week, Senate Republicans requested legislative leadership for an immediate oversight hearing to discuss ways to implement the State Auditor's recommendations. An oversight hearing was held on Wednesday, February 3 with the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) and the Assembly Insurance Committee. ★

Mystery Brings Unlikely Departments Together

By Ken Casparis, Sacramento County

SACRAMENTO COUNTY, CA (MPG) - This past December, a routine storm drain clearing led to an inter-departmental collaboration to identify the remains of a missing local man.

On Dec. 8, 2020, Sacramento County Department of Water Resources (DWR) employees were clearing a storm drain near Gordon Drive in Sacramento. While unclogging their vacuum machine, the crew manually pulled what was thought to be a stick out of the muck that clogged the machine only to find a shoe attached. It turned out to be a human leg bone and foot. DWR crews stopped work and notified the Sheriff's Department.

"Water Resources works regularly with law enforcement. Our staff teams up with deputies throughout the year as we clean up drainage culverts and water pipes because we run into homeless camps. We ask for the deputies' assistance to make sure nobody is harmed by our machines," said Water Resources Director, Michael Peterson. "So when our crews came across human remains, while shaken up by their discovery, they kept their cool and knew to call the Sheriff's Office for assistance."

When Sheriff's Office detectives responded to the scene, they discovered what appeared to be an additional bone in the storm drain. Detectives contacted the Sacramento Coroner's Office to assist with further evaluation of the remains.

Deputies and a Forensic Pathologist from the Coroner's Office responded to the scene. The leg bone and an additional bone found in the storm drain were determined to be human. Coroner personnel also searched a second area of the storm drain and discovered even more bones. The bones were

retrieved by Coroner personnel and were found to be an almost complete human skeleton.

In addition to the skeletal remains, a debit type card with no name printed on it was also recovered. The debit card company was contacted by the Sheriff's Office and it was learned that the card belonged to a male subject that had been reported missing. The male subject was last seen in November of 2018.

After seeing news reports of remains being found in the area of Stockton Blvd and Gordon Drive, the family of the missing male contacted the Sacramento County Coroner's Office to see if the bones found in the storm drain could belong to their missing relative.

The brother and daughter of the missing person provided DNA samples to the Sacramento County Coroner's Office. The Coroner's Office ran the DNA samples provided by the family and a sample from the remains using their ANDE Rapid DNA instrument. The Coroner's office was able to confirm that the remains belong to the missing male subject, and this case came to a close.

"While my team often works with the Sheriff's Office, we don't usually work with Water Resources, so this was a unique experience for us," said Kim Gin, Sacramento County Coroner. "This was a great example of County employees, that don't usually work together, coming together to identify this local man and bring some closure to his family."

The Sacramento County Coroner's Office has 73 active "John Doe" and "Jane Doe" cases dating back to 1975, and they need your help to identify them. If you recognize the description of someone on this site that could lead to an identification, please contact the Coroner's office by calling (916) 874-9320 or email coronerweb@saccounty.net ★

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Meeting Critical Needs

Continued from page 1
skills, job-training scholarships, career planning, and connections to local employers. The Job Center also offers employment support for youths and refugees.

As a local non-profit, FCCP works to identify the most critical needs, often providing participants with basic needs such as food, clothing, and financial assistance. In addition to providing direct access to resources, FCCP has developed many community partnerships, so they can coordinate with other non-profit agencies and refer citizens to other resources as needed.

All of the services offered by FCCP are free to participants. To finance the wide variety of supportive programs, FCCP receives funding from federal, state, and local county and city grants. Because grants often have specific guidelines for how the funds can be used, some programs have income eligibility requirements. That's why FCCP also relies on private donations in order to enhance the services they offer. Sanger explained that private donations "allow us to be more nimble and responsive to the community when needs crop up." While grant monies are the financial foundation of the organization's services, Sanger described the unrestricted funds as "critical."

The COVID-19 pandemic presented a new challenge for FCCP to continue services while protecting the health of staff and participants. With the first stay-at-home order last March, Sanger had to make the difficult call to temporarily shut down both the Family Resource Center and the Job Center, shifting into a remote work environment.



While providing most of their supportive services online during the pandemic, Folsom Cordova Community Partnership organized a drive-thru Harvest Festival for local families last October to offer a bit of holiday fun while protecting the health of participants and staff. Photo courtesy of FCCP

FCCP staff had to quickly change from face-to-face engagement to providing their services virtually. They reopened the centers in an extremely limited capacity in May, but only for those who are truly unable to access the services online. Sanger said that the pandemic "changed the way we outreach to families and engage with families. We have to meet families where they are, in a different way."

The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the community have been "severe," said Sanger, making FCCP's services even more essential. With such high rates of unemployment, the need for job search support has increased considerably. FCCP also helps people navigate the process of applying for unemployment benefits and getting their claim submitted as quickly as possible.

"The need for safety net services has increased exponentially," said Sanger. With many people out of work, families are behind on rent and struggling to put food on the table. People who have never sought supportive services in the past are now in need. A few months into

the pandemic, FCCP saw a 600% increase in requests for concrete supports like food, diapers, and money for rent and bills. The increase has now risen to 1,000%. To meet this dramatic increase in need, FCCP actively sought emergency grant funds from the federal and state governments, securing close to \$1 million in funding – most of which is going straight to community members. "It's still not meeting all the needs," said Sanger, "but it's making an impact for some."

FCCP is using some of that funding to operate one of Sacramento County's free COVID testing sites, at the Cordova Neighborhood Church (10600 Coloma Rd. in Rancho Cordova). Appointments can be scheduled through the website at <https://folsomcordova.setmore.com/>.

Sanger described FCCP's work as "seeing that gap and being willing to step into that space for our community." Even in the midst of a pandemic, FCCP is stepping up to bring the most critical services to those in the most need.

For more information, or to donate, visit www.theFCCP.org. ★



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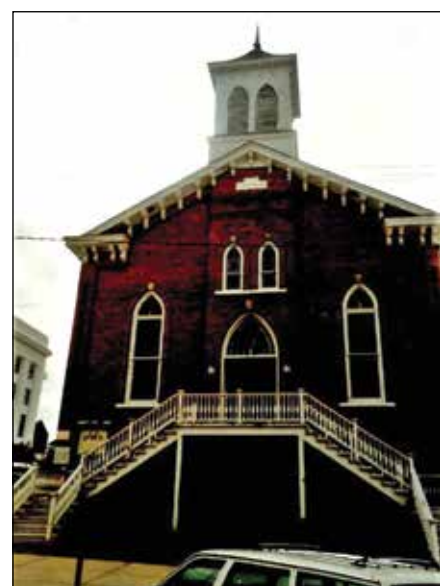
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Two Dr. Kings & Me



Dr. Bernice King responds to a question asked by David Dickstein at a global conference in 2019 (left and center); 1988 photo of the Montgomery, Ala. church where MLK started full-time preaching. Photos by David Dickstein

By Gold River Resident David Dickstein

Gold River isn't a "melting pot" of nationalities, ethnicities, cultures and backgrounds, and either was Orange County during my childhood. In fact, it wasn't until my 30s with a move to West L.A. when I lived in a diverse community. What an eye-opener it was, then, being among the minority during most of a two-week trek through the Deep South when I was 27.

Taking advantage of the opportunity to be exposed to another culture, I sought out places where I'd stand out if anyone noticed or cared. Being the only white person at a

spirited Halloween night showing of "A Nightmare on Elm Street 4" was the highlight of my stop in Jackson, Miss. Southern hospitality extended by all kinds followed from Louisiana and Mississippi to Tennessee and Alabama, but there was this one time.

Enticed by a billboard as I approached McComb, Miss., population 12,000, I pulled off the highway for the supposed "best butterscotch shake in Dixie!" As I waited for my order, two elderly white men on a bench engaged me in some small talk. All was congenial in the five minutes it took to make my treat—that is until I said "good afternoon" to a middle-aged Black woman who

shyly approached the walk-up window with her head kept down. The lady in a flowery house dress ignored my greeting and never made eye contact. For a moment I thought the woman was being rude, but when I turned my attention back toward the men and they gave me a shoulder colder than my butterscotch shake, I got the picture and chills not felt since childhood.

When I was 4, my dad drove the family to the Watts neighborhood of South L.A. to see the aftermath of the news-making riots. The visual of a community smashed and smoldering was an indelible civics lesson for this kid. So was the act of hate witnessed as an adult in McComb. Both times

I got a taste of the racial nightmare that inspired Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to write his "I Have a Dream" speech that is trending again with February being Black History Month.

Although we never spoke, that Mississippi woman who I can only assume was oppressed remained with me in spirit for the remainder of the road trip. Her torment accompanied me to the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, the site of Dr. King's assassination in 1968, and Dexter Avenue Baptist Church in Montgomery, Ala., where the future American hero began his full-time pastorate in 1954. A sense of awe enveloped me as I stood behind the very pulpit where Dr. King delivered his earlier sermons.

As fate would have it, 31 years later I was honored to meet Dr. King's youngest child, Dr. Bernice King. As CEO of The King Center in Atlanta, she represented the award-winning institution at the 2019 Nobel Peace Prize Laureates Summit in the Yucatan. Attending her press Q&A, during which she went off on President Donald Trump, I asked a serious question framed as quasi-lighthearted to spawn a candid answer.

"When the family sits down for Christmas dinner," I asked, "what's the conversation like with Alveda at the table?" Alveda Celeste King, an activist and former Georgia congresswoman, is a vocal supporter of the former president. She's also Bernice's cousin.

After a hearty chuckle and explaining to the local Mexican press who Alveda is, Martin Luther King's daughter gave an answer that would have made Dad proud.

"Because our family has such strong unconditional love for each other we do not let those kinds of things tear us apart as a family," she said. "One thing I've learned about different opinions and ideologies is if you sit down and listen long enough and shut down your right to be right and allow yourself to hear what a person is saying, you might discover a bit of truth. That's how my father developed his philosophy of non-violence. He was able to read and study a lot of different philosophers and theologians. Even those he didn't agree with. So, if we're going to create a more humane world, we have to learn to do that."

The female Dr. King continued with sage wisdom that if the nation were listening could have possibly prevented the riots that erupted in many of our country's urban centers this past summer and at the Capitol last month.

"We have a tendency with people we disagree with to disagree with them fully," she said. "If there's something specifically that I don't like about your ideology I'll shut you all the way down. I'll discount that there may be something in your makeup that is very beautiful, very powerful and has truth to it. But we don't allow ourselves to open up to people unless

they think mostly like us. And if we continue to do that then we're going to have friction and tension and conflict."

Amen.

I had the good fortune of sitting across from Bernice King on the flight from Merida to Mexico City. Overhearing her complain to an assistant about having a chill, I offered my blanket. Although I would have done the same for anyone, bringing comfort to the daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King would give me comfort as well. For 33 years I had been carrying guilt for not trying a second time to show kindness to that timid Black woman in Mississippi. I also was disappointed in myself for not speaking out when the two white men shunned me.

As I stood up from my seat and draped the blanket over Bernice King's lap, an alternate, more harmonious memory of that incident in McComb flashed in my head and warmed my heart. As I sat back down and fastened my seatbelt, Dr. King smiled at me and said, "You're a kind man."

Big points would have been scored with the minister had I quoted Ephesians 4:32, which tells us to "be kind and compassionate to one another." Instead, I remained silent for the rest of the flight, feeling humbled if not unworthy.

David Dickstein is a Gold River resident, award-winning writer and principal at the PR firm Prose & Comms Inc. He can be reached at david-dickstein1@gmail.com. ★

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How Long Will California Economy Languish?



By Dan Walters
CALMatters

As COVID-19 began surging through California a year ago, Gov. Gavin Newsom declared a state of emergency and ordered widespread restrictions on personal and economic activity to curb infection rates.

His actions immediately triggered a severe economic recession. California had been enjoying record-low unemployment just before the shutdown, 3.9% of the labor force, but within weeks the jobless rate quickly shot up to a record-high 16.4% as employers laid off workers.

Initially, there was a fingers-crossed hope that the recession would be what economists call a “V” – a deep plunge followed by an equally rapid recovery. However, as the public health crisis and the recession continued, it became apparent that it would be a “U” – a steep decline that reaches bottom, eventually followed by a gradual recovery.

Employment actually rebounded somewhat during summer and autumn months as Newsom loosened economic controls, although certain sectors such as tourism and travel continued to lag.

However, when infection rates, hospitalizations and deaths shot upward again late in the year – thanks,

probably, to too many holiday gatherings – Newsom clamped down again, businesses closed and joblessness again increased.

The state’s official unemployment rate – the percentage of the labor force not working – edged upward in December to 9% but when those who dropped out of the labor force or were involuntarily working part-time are included, the real rate is more like 15%.

Even without that adjustment, 9% is still very high and, according to the federal Bureau of Labor Statistics, the third highest of any state. Only tourism-dependent Nevada and Hawaii are higher, with South Dakota and Nebraska at other end of the scale at 3%.

Overall, California has lost 1.5 million jobs in the last year of pandemic and economic turmoil, leaving a salient question hanging in the air: How long will California’s pandemic-induced recession continue?

The answer depends on two unpredictable factors – when and if vaccinations can tame COVID-19 and whether President Joe Biden and Congress pump additional billions, or even trillions, of borrowed dollars into the nation’s economy.

Newsom’s proposed 2021-22 budget projects, “Businesses are expected to continue to operate at limited capacity into 2021. Increased automation and a shift to online retailing will lead to permanent job declines in leisure and hospitality, retail, and other services.”

The budget also implies that the bottom of the “U” will continue for some time,

saying, “Nonfarm employment for California is projected to recover to pre-pandemic levels in 2025.”

The millions of Californians affected by the pandemic’s economic fallout are understandably worried about their futures and their angst is one of the drivers of a petition campaign aimed at recalling Newsom.

Whether from concern for his constituents or worries about a recall, Newsom is proposing “a broad-based recovery package to support businesses, individuals and job creation both during the pandemic and as the state recovers. It totals \$14 billion, including \$3.5 billion in immediate relief for individuals and small businesses disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.”

While Newsom wants fast action from the Legislature, its fiscal advisor, Gabe Petek, wants a more deliberate and skeptical approach, noting that “unlike the federal government – which can run a deficit to pay for fiscal stimulus – the state must balance fiscal stimulus with other one-time and on-going spending priorities.”

In other words, a dollar spent on Newsom’s economic recovery plan is a dollar that can’t be spent on something else – unless, of course, the governor and legislators are also willing to raise taxes. As the pandemic, the recession and the recall campaign evolve, big state stimulus expenditures will be one of the year’s more interesting issues.

Dan Walters has been a journalist for nearly 60 years, spending all but a few of those years working for California newspapers. ★



By County Supervisor Sue Frost

Through the generosity of the Gold River Messenger, this column serves to provide an update about matters affecting the unincorporated community of Gold River.

Like me, I am sure many of you are eagerly awaiting the day that I have something to write about other

than the COVID-19 pandemic. Something happened just the other day that makes me feel the need to highlight the inconsistency in practices and what we should keep in mind should we ever find ourselves back in a pandemic situation. We all know the story so far. In March of last year, we went into a full stay-at-home order. Then, counties were placed on watch lists, and then the blueprint for a safer economy determined which tier of reopening we could enter. Then, in response to concerns that ICU capacities were dwindling, the state grouped counties and regions and declared that any region with less than 15% ICU capacity would go into a full shutdown for a minimum of three weeks.

The Greater Sacramento Region, consisting of 13 different counties, was ordered into the regional stay-at-home order on December 9th. We were anticipating remaining in the shutdown far beyond the minimum three-week requirement. On the morning of January 12th, our Public Health officials were briefing the Board

GOLD RIVER COMMUNITY UPDATE

Consistently Inconsistent: Sacramento Region Returns to Purple Tier

of Supervisors on the status of the County’s response to the pandemic. That briefing included that the regional ICU capacity remained at 9.4%, far below what was needed to reopen. Then, miraculously, our Public Health officials received a call from the state that the Sacramento region would be exiting the stay-at-home order and returning to the purple tier of reopening, effective immediately.

I was elated to hear the news. It is no secret that I have been a strong advocate for safely reopening our economy. I have advocated for the zip code based system so that Sacramento County does not see all of its customers flock to businesses in Roseville and El Dorado Hills when they open first. I have consistently asked for contact tracing data that justifies the closing of various businesses without success. Much of my frustration and the frustration I hear from local business owners comes from the perspective that the state just seems to be making up the rules as they go along. This recent move to reopen the Greater Sacramento region, while a positive move, shows just how subjective the rules continue to be. The reason the Greater Sacramento region was able to return to the purple tier was based on a four-week projection that our ICU capacity would reach approximately 19%. As far as I know, reopening based on a projection of ICU capacity was never a metric we were told could be used to reopen.

Again, I am thrilled that we are taking positive steps

in the direction of reopening our businesses. Our case rate appears to be hitting a plateau, and, obviously, our ICUs are starting to free up more space. The data around COVID-19 cases and deaths is essential, and it should be used to guide how we react to the pandemic. I can also accept that we continue to learn more about the virus and our own capacities to control it every day. That is why I am so opposed to knee-jerk reactions of the state every time they realize their plans aren’t working. For more than a month, businesses that had been acting in good faith to comply with public health guidance invested their time and money and brought back the employees they care about were told to shut down completely, again. The time for the state to flex emergency powers to appear in control is over. We now need to focus on keeping businesses safely open and getting the vaccine to as many people as are willing to take it. The sooner we get back to normal, the sooner we can get back to fixing the 99 other problems we already had on our plate before the pandemic hit.

Thank you for reading – and as always, if you want to contact me, call me at 916-874-5491, or e-mail me at SupervisorFrost@saccounty.net. Sue Frost represents the 4th District, which includes all or part of the communities of Citrus Heights, Folsom, Orangevale, Antelope, Rio Linda, Elverta, Gold River, Rancho Murietta, North Highlands, Carmichael, Foothill Farms and Fair Oaks. ★

Ask Toni

Medicare Prescription Drug Penalty Confusion!!



Toni King

Hello Toni:

Turned 65 in August 2018, continued to work full-time with an HSA that has a \$3000.00 deductible before any prescriptions or medical claims are paid by

the insurance plan. The HR manager of my employer advised me to enroll in Part A when I turned 65. Because I received wrong information, I could not fund my HSA from that time.

I decided to delay Part B until December 1st when I retired and enrolled in a Medicare supplement plan G and a Part D prescription drug plan also with a January 1st start date.

I have received a notice from CMS (Medicare) saying they do not have record of me having prescription drug coverage that “met Medicare’s minimum standards from 8/1/2018 to 12/31/2020 and I may receive a Part D late enrollment penalty. What does this mean?”

I thought applying for Part B kept me from a penalty. I do not understand any of this! Thank You, Claude from Dallas, TX

Claude:

I hate to inform you, but you have a Medicare problem! Your HSA health plan had a deductible of \$3,000 which is more than the \$445 Medicare Part D deductible for 2021 and you may not have met Medicare’s minimum standards.

Claude, the letter you received from the Medicare Part D plan that you enrolled in, explains what you should do to inform Medicare what prescription drug coverage you have had by either calling an 800 number or has a form describing what type of coverage you had which you can mail back to the Medicare Part D plan you enrolled in.

The Medicare & You handbook states: “Creditable” prescription drug coverage could include drug coverage from a current or former employer or union, TRICARE, Indian Health Service, the VA, or health insurance coverage. Your plan must tell you each year

if your drug coverage is “creditable coverage”. This information may be sent to you in a letter or included in a newsletter from the plan. Keep this information because you may need it when or if you join a Medicare drug plan late.”

Claude ... Did you receive such a letter informing you of “creditable coverage”? Creditable drug coverage should “meet or exceed” what Medicare’s Part D plan minimums are for that current year.

Your late enrollment period (LEP) does not begin from the day you lose or leave your company health plan, BUT from the month that your Medicare Part A started, and your Medicare Part A began when you turned 65.

This LEP (late enrollment period) penalty can be because:

- 1) You waited past 63 days without creditable prescription drug coverage when you are leaving company benefits and you are older than 65 years old and 90 days. Do not wait past 63 days to get Part D when leaving company health plans.
- 2) Your company prescription drug benefits (not health benefits) are not creditable as Medicare declares. Claude, this is your situation.
- 3) You simply never enrolled in Medicare Part D when you were first eligible and want to enroll.

Americans retiring after 65 with employers’ benefits and taking the “Request for Employment Information CMS L-564” form to Social Security to avoid the “famous” Medicare Part B penalty need to realize that this form only informs Medicare that you have had employer benefits since turning 65. The form does not inform Medicare that you had “creditable” prescription drug coverage.

2021 Confused about Medicare Zoom webinars is Thursday, February 25th at 4:00 PM. Visit www.tonisays.com to sign up for Toni’s new event.

Toni King, Medicare author/advocate is giving a \$5 discount to the Toni Says® readers on the new 2021 Medicare Survival Guide® Advanced book at www.tonisays.com. Have a Medicare question? Call 832/519-8664 or email info@tonisays.com. ★

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Poppoff!

With Mary Jane Popp

Valentine Soulmate

Ladies, Valentine's Day is just around the corner, but have you made good decisions on your potential partner? Are you making the same mistakes over and over? **Arnoux Goran**, author speaker and personal transformation expert, says once a woman knows the six types of men, she can navigate her way to a red hot romance. He shares his secrets in "How to Manifest Your Soulmate." Here's the six types from worst to best.

CATEGORY 6 IS THE WORST. He's a monster, sociopath or psychopath who should be locked up. Enough said.

CATEGORY 5 IS SOMEONE WHO USES WOMEN. He's the type of guy who tells a girl he loves her, and then, after they have sex, she never hears from him again. **CATEGORY 4 IS THE MAN WHO TREATS WOMEN LIKE PROPERTY.**

He's a man who thinks a woman is nothing more than an animated Barbie doll. He has a car, he has a house, he has a dog... and he has a woman. **CATEGORY 3 IS A MAN WHO IS A NATURALLY MASCULINE BEING WHO BEHAVES FEMININE WITH HIS WOMAN.** He's afraid to "be a man" with her, to take the lead, or even be strong on her behalf.

CATEGORY 2 IS THE MAN THAT HONORS AND LOVES WOMEN, BUT ISN'T VERY GOOD AT RELATIONSHIPS. He's not good at communicating. He has intimacy and jealousy issues. He doesn't please his woman sexually. He doesn't take responsibility for his emotions and acts like other people are the cause of how he feels. **FINALLY, YOU HAVE THE MAN WHO LOVES AND**

RESPECTS WOMEN, AND IS GOOD AT RELATIONSHIPS. He creates intimacy easily, takes charge automatically, and always speaks lovingly to his lady. He brings his woman to ecstasy in bed.

He is good at romance and remembering little things. Many women don't believe he exists...which is why they can't find him, even if he lives right next door

Here are three tips to find HIM! **1) BELIEVE HE EXISTS AND YOU CAN BE WITH HIM.** It's harder than it sounds.

It's a choice, but the hard part is letting go of all the sadness that you haven't met him yet, the fear you'll never meet him, and the anger towards the past men you dated who were jerks, in order to open your heart again to love. **2) MAKE A CLEAR INTENTION AND DECLARATION TO THE UNIVERSE THAT THIS IS SOMETHING YOU WANT IN YOUR LIFE.** Get the power of your intention focused in the direction of attracting and meeting that beautiful man. **3) GET AN EDUCATION IN RELATIONSHIPS AND DATING, ESPECIALLY IN HOW TO DROP YOUR BAGGAGE FROM THE PAST.**

Check out **Arnoux's** course at www.howtomanifestyoursoulmate.com. It goes into detail so you can be happy and ready to meet Mr. Wonderful. Arnoux Goran is the founder of Total Health Mastery University and has changed the lives of many thousands of people all over the world. Hope you find the love of your life. I did. Rick and I celebrated our Golden Wedding Anniversary this January!!! **HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!!!** ★

SMUD Accelerates its Fleet Electrification with Five All-Electric Work Trucks

SMUD News Release

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - SMUD has partnered with Zeus Electric Chassis, Inc. and the California Mobility Center (CMC) to procure five custom, all-electric work trucks as it works to transition to an all-electric fleet. The trucks are the only all-electric work truck chassis manufactured in North America in the medium duty class and will be customized for a variety of uses throughout SMUD's service territory.

"This is a phenomenal addition to our fleet," said SMUD General Manager and CEO Paul Lau. "Not only does it showcase the future of electric vehicles and the ability to transition a large fleet to all-electric, but it also reduces our operating costs and greenhouse gases - helping us meet our goal of zero carbon by 2030."

SMUD has invested in fleet electrification for more than 10 years and has a total of 950 assets in its fleet consisting of sedans, service trucks, bucket trucks, trailers, cable pullers and other construction equipment. Electrification efforts have depended upon commercially available technology and focused on electric and hybrid light duty vehicles and hybrid

bucket trucks. Just last year, SMUD added 16 new Chevy Bolts to its fleet, bringing the count to 122 all-electric or hybrid vehicles across the fleet.

SMUD has a goal to transition 25 percent of its total fleet to electric or hybrid options by 2022 and recently added electric service trucks to its fleet.

Zeus is a start-up company out of Lindstrom, MN and is currently the only complete custom upfit electric truck chassis manufacturer in North America for medium duty work trucks.

SMUD's fleet engineers helped design the vehicle specifications and Zeus will fabricate the trucks in collaboration with the CMC. With a nine-month lead time, SMUD hopes to have the vehicles in operation by the end of the year.

SMUD has long been a supporter of electric vehicles, having worked with major automakers and a wide variety of technology companies for the past 30 years to help test and optimize EVs and vehicle charging equipment, and demonstrate real-world effectiveness.

SMUD's efforts and partnerships have already brought electric vehicles to underserved communities; electric school buses to

local districts; clean public transportation; mobile battery charging stations and more.

Additionally, SMUD's special EV rate discount allows EV owners to save money when they charge their vehicles between midnight and 6 a.m. This allows owners to maximize their savings while mitigating the impact to SMUD's electric grid for all customers.

SMUD was introduced to Zeus through its work with the California Mobility Center that was founded to serve as an innovation hub of policy, funding and commercialization of clean transportation technologies including autonomous transportation; electric vehicles; battery storage; shared mobility solutions; public transit and more. The goal is to provide equal opportunities in Sacramento for increased mobility and access to employment, healthcare and education.

As the nation's sixth-largest, community-owned, not-for-profit electric service provider, SMUD has been providing low-cost, reliable electricity for almost 75 years to Sacramento County (and small adjoining portions of Placer and Yolo Counties). ★

Social Security Matters

Social Security's "First Year" Rule



By **Russell Gloor**, AMAC Certified Social Security Advisor

Dear Rusty: I am 63. My birthday is 10/23/1957. I currently draw a small pension of \$14K and a salary of \$75K. I'm contemplating retirement at the end of April this year and I'd like to start drawing Social Security beginning June 1st. I've been told by friends that I won't be able to start drawing it this year because I will already have exceeded the maximum Social Security allows me to earn in a year. Is this true? Should I postpone my retirement until the end of the year? Please advise. **Signed: Confused by Friends**

Dear Confused: Yours is a perfect example of why you should always check with a reputable source when receiving Social Security advice from friends.

Whenever Social Security (SS) benefits are claimed before reaching full retirement age (FRA), the so-called "earnings test" applies. This sets an earnings limit, which for 2021 is \$18,960 annually - an amount you will have exceeded by the time you start your SS benefits in June. However, Social Security also has a special "first year" rule which applies to anyone who claims early Social Security benefits mid-year.



The first-year rule essentially waives using the annual earnings limit in your first year and, instead, applies a monthly earnings limit for the remainder of the year after your benefits start. The monthly limit is 1/12th the amount of the annual limit, so in 2021 the monthly limit is \$1,580. Provided you don't exceed the monthly limit after your benefits start and during the period from June 2021 through December 2021 (and if you're fully retiring from work you won't), you'll not exceed the earnings limit during your first year collecting benefits. Note, your pension and other "passive" income doesn't count toward the earnings limit; only earnings from working count. So essentially, using the "first year" rule means your earnings before you claim benefits won't count, including any final pay you receive in the month you begin your benefits.

Starting in 2022, should you decide to return to work, you'll be subject to the annual limit, which will be a bit more than the 2021 limit because the limit changes annually with changes to the National Average Wage Index. The earnings limit applies until you reach your full retirement age, after which you can earn as much as you like without jeopardizing your Social Security benefits. In the year you reach your full retirement

age of 66 1/2, your annual earnings limit will increase by about 2.6 times, further mitigating risk of exceeding the earnings limit in the year you attain FRA.

For awareness, if you were to return to work in any year between 2022 and the year prior to the year you attain FRA, and you exceed the annual earnings limit, Social Security will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$2 you are over the limit. In the year you reach FRA, if you were to work and exceed the increased limit, SS will take back benefits equal to \$1 for every \$3 you exceed the limit by. However, at your FRA you'll receive time-credit for any months your benefits were withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit, which will result in your benefit amount being increased slightly at your full retirement age. In this way, you may, over time, recover any benefits which were withheld because you exceeded the earnings limit.

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Senate Republicans Lead Bipartisan Call for Oversight Hearing in Response to Scathing EDD Audit Results

By **Jacqui Nguyen**, California Senate Republicans

SACRAMENTO, CA (MPG) - The non-partisan State Auditor released the results of an audit about the Employment Development Department (EDD) originally called for by members of the Senate Republican Caucus last summer. The audit results come after news reports show an increase in the number of backlogged claims and that rampant fraudulent unemployment claims are now at a staggering \$11 billion and could rise as high as \$30 billion.

The audit found that "the economic downturn worsened EDD's already poor performance" and that, even after adding numerous staff, EDD "only marginally improved the percentage of answered calls." Last year, Senate Republicans asked for call center metrics to be included in the

budget as a way to improve accountability, but the budget approved by the Governor and Democratic leadership did not include that proposal. The audit also found that, due to the inefficiencies and poor management at the EDD, some Californians will have to pay back benefits.

In response to the audit, Senate Republican Leader Shannon Grove (R-Bakersfield) and a bipartisan group of senators delivered a letter to the Chair of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee (JLAC) and the Chair of Senate Budget Subcommittee #5 requesting an immediate oversight hearing. The oversight hearing should focus on EDD implementing the Auditor's recommendations to address the backlog of claims and prevent future fraud. To download the bipartisan letter go to: cssrc.us/sites/default/files/210126_EDD-Hearing-Request.pdf ★

Proposition 19 Puts Family Legacies at Risk

Continued from page 1

you would have to give it up and move to qualify for the exemption.

The date these changes go into effect is right around the corner. If you are planning on transferring property to a child or grandchild, please be aware of the very different landscape that awaits you and them after February 16.

There are a thousand unanswered questions regarding these changes that are not clarified in the proposition language. What happens if multiple children receive a property but only one makes it a primary residence, for example? What happens if someone qualifies for the exclusion, then moves out of the primary residence for a time, then moves back in? Does the exemption kick back in or is it lost forever? It was an initiative written with little concern for detail.

Proposition 19 does provide some new and welcome benefits for California taxpayers, most notably that it allows certain property owners to transfer their base-year tax assessment to all 58 counties. This allows homeowners who want to downsize, move closer to their children, or relocate for any other reason to keep a lower property tax. Prior to Prop. 19, that benefit was only available within counties or in a handful of counties that accepted

base-year transfers. Taxpayers can now also use that transfer provision three times instead of the one-time, geographically limited use in prior law.

Although I favor the base-year transfer provisions, I oppose this new tax increase, which will take hundreds of millions of dollars a year from Californians inheriting their family's biggest asset. But it's now the law, and as a Board of Equalization Member and taxpayer advocate, I will be seeking to identify every area where Prop. 19 is unclear and am committed to working with the legislature, county assessors, tax professionals and taxpayers to ensure effective administration of this new law.

Visit my website at boe.ca.gov/gaines for more information on Prop. 19 and for examples of how the new law would affect passed-down properties. Please consult a qualified attorney or tax professional for advice on transferring any property.

Senator Ted Gaines was elected to represent the Board of Equalization's First District. He is a leading taxpayer advocate and is committed to providing trustworthy and transparent representation for nearly ten million constituents in 30 counties of northern, eastern, and southern California. For more information, visit boe.ca.gov/Gaines. ★

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State Lifts Suspensions of Half a Million Driver's Licenses

By Robert Lewis,
CALMatters.org

More than 400,000 Californians had their driver's licenses reinstated last month after an appeals court ruled that the state was illegally penalizing people who failed to appear in court on costly traffic tickets.

The lawsuit was part of a broader, ongoing effort by legal advocacy organizations to roll back California's traffic fines and court fees, which they contend disproportionately impact low-income residents and communities of color.

More than three million traffic infraction citations are issued in California every year, averaging between \$600 and \$700 each.

California has among the highest traffic ticket penalties in the country due to a litany of state and county add-on fees. A ticket for running a red light – which has a base fine of \$100 – actually costs nearly \$500 because of state and local fees, and more than \$800 if the driver misses a deadline to pay or appear in court.

The ruling “limits this blunt instrument of punishing people for not taking care of traffic tickets when in reality, for many Californians, traffic tickets are simply too expensive to take care of,” said Rebecca Miller, senior attorney at the Western Center on Law and Poverty, one of the organizations that sued the Department of Motor Vehicles.

“Like any state in the country, we have over-policing of lower-income and black and brown communities in California.”

Several Bay Area residents sued the DMV in 2016 when their licenses were suspended after they failed to pay a traffic ticket or appear in court. Last June, a three-judge panel in the First Appellate District ruled in their favor, deciding that the state inappropriately suspended the licenses of drivers without formal notices from traffic courts that their failure to appear was willful.

As a result, the DMV lifted suspensions on 555,000 driver's licenses. Because some had additional suspensions for other reasons, about 426,000 motorists were eligible to have their licenses reinstated, according to the DMV.

Legal aid groups – the Western Center on Law and Poverty, Bay Area Legal Aid, the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area and the East Bay Community Law Center – represented the plaintiffs.

The lead plaintiff, Guillermo Hernandez, of Richmond, had been ticketed in 2013 for not updating his driver's license information and driving without a valid registration, court records show.

Hernandez said he tried to go to court to take care of the ticket but was told twice that clerks couldn't find it in the system. It was only later when he tried to renew his license that he discovered there was a hold on it for more than \$900 in fines and fees.

“At that time I just didn't have the money. I didn't have work. That's a lot of money... How am I going to pay it?” he said, speaking in Spanish.

Hernandez had to cut back on his work buying and selling secondhand goods around the area. “I was afraid they would grab



Guillermo Hernandez, who uses his van for his businesses, lost work when his license was suspended in 2013 for failure to pay a ticket. He sued the DMV along with several other Bay Area residents and won. Photo by Anne Wernikoff, CALMatters

me and make me pay more money for tickets,” he said.

Hernandez said he's glad he saw the lawsuit through the appeals court even after his attorney helped him get onto a repayment plan and get his license back before the case concluded.

“I feel really proud that I did something for society,” he said.

The appellate opinion is somewhat narrow and technical: By law the DMV is supposed to suspend a license if it receives a notice from a traffic court that a driver “willfully” violated a written promise to appear in court, according to the opinion. The DMV argued that when it receives notices a driver failed to appear in court that indicates that the actions were willful. The trial court agreed, but the Appeals Court found that the DMV needed a more formal notice that a driver broke the law.

The DMV said in a statement to CALMatters that from now on it “will only impose a (failure to appear) suspension based upon misdemeanor (failure to appear) notifications submitted by the courts.”

But attorneys involved in the case said it's too soon to tell how the case will affect license suspensions going forward.

Fees Tacked onto Traffic Fines

Economic justice advocates and some government officials are examining court fines and fees as part of a national reckoning over racial disparities in the justice system. A growing body of data suggests black and brown drivers are more likely to be pulled over than white motorists, and they often face staggering bills for traffic tickets.

That's because state and local governments have tacked on numerous fees that have nothing to do with traffic violations, said Martin Hoshino, the state Judicial Council's administrative director, who served on a national task force regarding fines, fees and bail practices.

“It became unnerving to think that courts had been turned into revenue centers, and judicial officers were in this really awkward position of perhaps knowing they were imposing a fine or fee for which their court operation was benefiting. I think that's wrong,” Hoshino said.

Records and interviews show fees in criminal court, including for traffic violations, have funded an array of services and projects in California, including court construction, DNA collection, emergency medical

air transport and sunken vessel recovery off the coast.

“When you put all of the decisions together and look at it holistically 30 years later, you find out you've created a regressive, harmful, at times self-defeating revenue system because you're pushing people into debt traps,” Hoshino said.

In addition, “you're not able to collect the debt,” he said. Uncollected debt on court fines and fees doubled over the past decade to roughly \$10 billion in California.

Stacey Kmetz knows about the burden of traffic ticket debt. The San Jose resident, who was out of work and sleeping on a friend's couch, got a nearly \$900 ticket in Marin County for driving without proof of insurance.

“I was really stuck. I asked everybody I knew for help,” Kmetz said.

When she didn't appear in traffic court by the date on her citation, her license was suspended. Kmetz ultimately went to court and got a \$78-a-month payment plan, records show. But the court did not notify the DMV to lift the suspension. “I pleaded to have that license so I could pay my bills and look for work,” she said. “I was working with two temp agencies who wanted nothing to do with me when I explained the situation.”

Legal Aid attorneys stepped in and got the court to recall the failure-to-appear notification. Kmetz was able to get her license back in October after six months without it.

“It was terrible. The anxiety of the whole dilemma...it was awful,” she said, adding that she's since used her license to work as a driver for some delivery apps.

Pilot Program To Avoid Court Appearances

Lawmakers and court officials have taken some recent steps: They have eliminated license suspensions for failing to pay traffic tickets and developed payment plans.

The court system also developed a pilot project that makes it easier for low-income motorists to request a traffic ticket fee reduction. A website called MyCitations allows motorists to request a reduction online. The courts can consider a driver's income and other information on their ability to pay before deciding whether to lower a penalty.

The virtual ticket system was created so that motorists wouldn't have to appear in person at a courthouse if they wanted to get

their ticket debt reduced.

Many Californians can't afford a day off work to plead their case to a judge. But when they don't pay and don't show up at court, the fines increase, their licenses can be suspended and if they are caught driving on a suspended license, they face criminal charges.

“It's the criminalization of poverty,” said Asher Waite-Jones, staff attorney and clinical supervisor at the East Bay Community Law Center.

The pilot project includes seven counties. Tulare, Shasta and Ventura counties launched the first year, San Francisco and Santa Clara counties are in year two and Fresno and Monterey counties are launching now.

From April 2019 through Nov. 2020, nearly 7,000 drivers requested a fine and fee reduction through the pilot program. More than 85 percent of those drivers reported incomes below the poverty line and their debt was an average of 447 days outstanding, according to a recent report on the project the Judicial Council prepared for the legislature. Three quarters of the requests were approved; the penalty was reduced an average of \$347 per ticket, according to the report.

The governor's current budget proposal includes money to bring the pilot system statewide. Ongoing funding would increase to \$58.4 million by 2024-25.

“It's been really important during the pandemic

because it gives people a way to request a discount without going into traffic court,” said Anne Stuhldreher, director of the financial justice project in the San Francisco treasurer's office. “We should be able to hold people accountable without putting them in financial distress.”

Stuhldreher and legal service attorneys suggest a better fix is doing away with many of the fees. Last year, lawmakers eliminated a number of fees levied in criminal court. Advocates are pushing them to do the same with traffic tickets.

When courts do reduce a driver's ticket penalty, the amount varies, depending on the court and judge; the reduction can be 50 percent in some courts and 80 percent in others.

“Fifty percent is not necessarily meaningful to many of my clients who are homeless or completely destitute,” said Waite-Jones, the East Bay Community Law Center attorney.

The court system administrator, Hoshino, recommends more substantial changes from lawmakers.

But he also worries about how California will make up the revenue for vital services if the fees are slashed. The state collected \$1.4 billion in court fines and fees – all cases, not just traffic-related – in 2018-19.

“If you're going to remove \$1.4 billion for state and local programs, you're either going to end up abolishing those programs or you're going to have to find alternatives,” Hoshino said. ★

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Mike Galli is PGA Golf Professional of the Year in Northern California



Mike Galli, professional golfer at North Ridge Country Club. Photo courtesy Sally Galli

By Sally Galli, SGC

FAIR OAKS, CA (MPG) - In acknowledgement for his outstanding dedication and performance, Mike Galli, Head Golf Professional at North Ridge Country Club, is the recipient of the 2020 Northern California PGA Golf Professional

of the Year Award. This honor is awarded to a PGA Professional for qualities of leadership, strong moral character, and a substantial record of service to the PGA and game of golf. Galli has spent the past 25 years at North Ridge Country Club, where he manages golf operations including teaching, tournaments, and course play for the 462-member, private facility.

Galli's passion as a teacher is evident. He is a highly regarded golf instructor and Certified Plane Truth Instructor. His study of the game and the mental-physical connection are the cornerstones to his teaching philosophy. With a desire for helping players

lower their handicap and enjoy this great game, he develops and coaches players of all levels.

Mike served four years as President of the North State PGA Chapter. With the help of an enthusiastic board, he proudly implemented many procedures and events to encourage growth of the Chapter, participation, camaraderie, and, of course, fun.

A native of Northern California, Galli played for San Joaquin Delta Junior College and California State University, Sacramento.

Mike would say simply "Golf has to be fun." It is his charisma and love of the game that has led to his continuing success. ★

Scrambling for Shots

Continued from page 1

health systems weren't at all ready for an onslaught of potentially 6 million seniors. Not all adopted the state's recommendation, creating a patchwork of access that Californians are now trying to decipher.

Reports of glitches mounted as counties launched dozens of different online platforms for appointment sign-ups and waiting lists. Tiny Inyo County, with about 18,000 residents, had to ask people to sign up with just a Google form.

Californians across the state reported finding every appointment taken online and voiced their outrage on social media. They held on phone lines for hours. Their bewilderment and frustration only grew as they learned that some vaccination sites would only accept people 75 and older, while some would accept those 65 and above. And some still would only immunize health workers because they didn't have enough doses for everyone.

"Any rollout like this is bound to run into snags, but this level of problems is concerning," said Dorit Rubinstein Reiss, professor and vaccine expert at UC Hastings College of Law. "Every day we wait, thousands of people are at risk of dying."

The state's public health agency reported

42,655 new cases and 637 deaths as a more infectious "U.K." coronavirus variant spreads across California and nationwide. About 32 cases of the variant have been reported in California, more than any other state, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

California continues its winter surge - the worst since the pandemic started. About 13% of tests are coming back positive, although hospitalizations are beginning to decrease slightly, according to the latest state data.

Leah Russin, co-founder of the advocacy group Vaccinate California, empathized with local public health officials who, she said, have been asked to roll out mass vaccination campaigns at the same time as they're battling the worst surge of the pandemic. But Californians deserve better, she said.

"It feels like some decisions have been made that haven't been thoroughly explained and they may increase inequity or confusion. Neither of those things are good at a time when we're fighting against extraordinary mistrust of government," said Leah Russin, co-founder of Vaccinate California.

"We have to be exceedingly transparent and do it fast, without mistakes. I know I'm asking us to be amazing, but we have to be." ★

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

I enjoy reading the Gold River Messenger and appreciate the high level of positive local news reporting and the positive column presentations of your regular contributors.

I was however, quite disappointed with certain aspects of the January issue, namely the "Fools Gold" item on page 4. Specifically, I question the appropriateness of negative references to the alleged "Registered Sex Offenders" in a certain defined area of the "market place" you purport to represent, namely Mobile Country Club.

Obviously, the Fools Gold writer looks deeply for information to quote. If so, he also would know that Mobile Country Club is one of the best "Senior" (55+) mobile home communities in the Sacramento area and one of Gold Rivers closest associated communities. The writer's somewhat gloating comment to the effect that, "at least we don't have those kinds of people in Gold River" is arrogant and disrespectful to the MCC community and to the subjects of the RSO.

I am VERY familiar with the RSO website and supposedly so is the writer of Fools Gold. Then, certainly he is aware of the rules, regulations, and restrictions surrounding the use of the RSO information. I question the propriety of publishing the relatively close locations of said persons. Those on the RSO list were convicted, sentenced, and served their time to fulfil their punishment. There upon they were released and have the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness including the right to earn a living, live peacefully, and not being subjected to harassment by others. Your article appears to have sparked activity and comments in MCC edging toward the harassment of RSO subjects.

Also, your singling out and publishing that Mobile Country Club has several former sex offenders living within that community may effectively be creating a "red lining" and/or "steering" impact upon this part of your community. Red lining is prohibited in the real estate business and the real estate mortgage business and non-compliance carries harsh penalties.

For perspective, let me just say that my business experience includes over 26 years with two major national banks. My work included real estate lending, business lending, branch office management and regional supervision. My ending corporate level was Vice President. My second career was in real estate brokerage over the last 30+ years wherein we built a multi-office company with over 30 agents. The subject of Registered Sex Offenders is part of every real estate sales/purchase contract and must be carefully followed. (And never as loose as Fool's Gold just did.)

Very Sincerely,

WMP



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<p>MEOW MIX CAT FOOD</p> <p>Market Select 2.75 Oz Cup Limit 1 Case 53¢</p>	<p>ADVANTAGE FLEA CONTROL & TREATMENT</p> <p>Dog Small (Green) Dog Extra Large (Blue) Dog Medium (Teal) Cat Small (Orange) Dog Large (Red) Cat Large (Purple) Limit 2 Per Family. Cannot be combined with any other offer. OUR REGULAR LOW PRICES</p>	<p>PET 'n SHAPE HEALTHY DOG TREATS</p> <p>All Varieties 20% OFF OUR SUPER LOW PRICES</p>	<p>PETSPORT DOG TOYS</p> <p>•Tuff Balls •Fetch Me Fido •Fling Thing •Biscuit Buddy •Soft Toys •Twisted Chews •Ass't Toys All Varieties 20% OFF OUR SUPER LOW PRICES</p>
<p>BAGS ON BOARD WASTE PICK UP BAGS</p> <p>•Refills •Hand Armor •Dispenser •Green Pups 20% OFF OUR SUPER LOW PRICES</p>	<p>VAN NESS BOWLS</p> <p>•Crocks •Ecoware •Stainless All Varieties 20% OFF OUR SUPER LOW PRICES</p>	<p>MARINELAND POWER FILTER SALE</p> <p>MODEL TANK SIZE PET CLUB SALE</p> <p>PENGUIN 100B20 Gal. \$17.99 PENGUIN 150B30 Gal. \$24.99 PENGUIN 200B50 Gal. \$29.99 PENGUIN 350B75 Gal. \$39.99</p>	<p>AQUEON BOXED 10 GALLON TANK With Economy Kit</p> <p>Just add Heater For Tropical Fish \$36.99 Limit 1 Per Family</p>
<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>JONNY CAT PREMIUM CAT LITTER</p> <p>10 Lb Bag Limit 2 Bags Per Family Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 2/10/21 - 2/16/21 \$1.79 CHM PLU 365</p>	<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>WHISKAS TEMPTATIONS CAT TREATS</p> <p>•All Varieties 3 Oz. Limit 2 Pkgs With Coupon Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 2/10/21 - 2/16/21 \$1.39 CHM PLU 569</p>	<p>BONUS COUPON</p> <p>FANCY FEAST GOURMET CANNED CAT FOOD</p> <p>3 Oz - All Varieties Except Elegant Medley Limit 1 Case Per Family Limit One Coupon Per Family Price Valid Only With Coupon Effective 2/10/21 - 2/16/21 ON SALE Everyday CHM PLU 361</p>	